

GILA NATIONAL FOREST



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Emergency Closures at Forks/Grapevine Area on the Wilderness Ranger District

Silver City, NM July 2, 2014--During the summer and fall of 2013, the Gila River reached record flow rates. This caused extensive damage to the riverbanks and flood plains along the river. The low areas along the Gila River in the vicinity of the Forks and Grapevine Campgrounds on the Wilderness Ranger District experienced major flooding from these high river flows. This caused much of the riverbank and adjacent flood plains to erode away. Many of these eroded areas were popular camping spots along the river. Due to the repeated large forest fires from the past few years and monsoonal rains, it is expected for the foreseeable future that flooding and erosion of the riverbanks will continue.

Gila Forest Supervisor, Kelly Russell, issued an Emergency Closure Order for public safety to restrict use and hours of use for areas around the Forks and Grapevine Campgrounds. The Closure Order will:

- Restrict camping from the lower Forks camping area and areas along the Gila River from north of the Forks Campground to the southern end of Grapevine Campground along the East Fork of the Gila River. This area will be open for Day Use. (Grapevine Campground is open for camping)
- Close FR613 and FR613A to vehicle travel—this is the road that fords the Gila River to the dispersed camping sites to the north of the lower Forks area.
- Close the Day Use area in the lower Forks area and along the Gila River to all entry from 8:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

The Emergency Order is in effect July 3, 2014 at 6:00 a.m. and will remain in effect until further notice.

The restricted area will be open for Day Use. Visitors can drive on FR614 to the lower Forks area for Day Use only. The closure has been issued due to the continued threat of high river flows predicted for this monsoon season and the high risk of not being able to alert visitors in a timely manner to immediately vacate the area when flooding is forecast.

“With the threat of continued flooding this monsoon season, I want to make sure the public is safe. I understand this is a popular camping area and restricting use will inconvenience some visitors, however visitor safety is my utmost priority,” says acting Wilderness District Ranger Teresa Smergut.

For further information and maps contact the Wilderness Ranger District at 575 536-2250, the Gila Visitor Center at 575 536-9461 or visit the Forest website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/gila>

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